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December 10, 2008

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: John F. Schunhoff, Ph.D. 
Interim Director

SUBJECT: **MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., MULTI-SERVICE
AMBULATORY CARE CENTER (MLK MACC)
NURSE COMPETENCY TESTING**

The competency testing of the licensed and un-licensed nursing personnel at MLK MACC was conducted on November 17th, 18th, and 19th with a retesting date of November 25th. The rigorous testing process which utilized the format and content from Harbor-UCLA Medical Center was overseen by Vivian Branchick, Director of Nursing Affairs. A new procedure for processing nurses who had to be retested was also implemented in collaboration with Human Resources and Local 721. The new procedure for testing of core competencies only allowed two attempts to pass. A nurse who fails after the initial testing was allowed to retest once. Failure to pass the retesting would place the employee into Performance Management, a disciplinary process that could result in anything from suspension to demotion to discharge, if appropriate. On the first attempt, there was an overall 80% pass rate. On the second attempt, 100% of those retested were successful.

Test Development:

The Office of Nursing Affairs worked with a committee made up of MLK educators and educators from other Department of Health Services (DHS) facilities in putting together a competency testing program that would bring accountability and expectations at the staff level while ensuring the integrity of the testing process. Several changes were made from the previous competency testing process including the following:

1. Testing stations were streamlined and modified to reflect the MACC environment, i.e. clinic setting.
2. Testing materials and study guides were streamlined and detailed to reflect the step by step process for each testing station.
3. Nurse educators from all DHS facilities were utilized to supervise testing stations.
4. Nurses who needed to be retested were given an extra week to study.

5. Expectations were established up front, including the limitation of one retest before employees are placed into Performance Management, a disciplinary process resulting in suspension, demotion or discharge.

Testing of Un-licensed Staff:

The testing of 60 un-licensed nurses was conducted on November 17th. They were tested on three areas:

- Hand Hygiene
- Vital Signs
- Patient Safety

One nurse attendant did not pass one testing station. She came back for retesting the same day and passed, resulting in 100% pass rate for the un-licensed staff.

Testing of Licensed Staff:

The testing of 131 licensed nurses was conducted on November 18th and 19th. Testing consisted of seven skills validation and three written tests.

Skills Validation Testing:

- Medication Safety
- Defibrillation
- Bag-Valve Mask
- Hand Hygiene
- Patient Education
- Mock Code
- Point of Care Testing

Written Testing:

- Medication Calculation
- Medication Safety
- Point of Care Testing

All licensed nursing personnel were tested except for three who were on vacation and those who are on extended leave of absence. They will be tested immediately upon returning to work. Thirty eight nurses did not pass the initial testing. They were retested on November 25th with 100% pass rate.

We are very pleased with the outcome and, more importantly, with the rigorous process that was established for this testing, which will serve as a template for the standardized testing across the system.

JFS:vb

c: Chief Executive Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
Acting Auditor-Controller
Director of Personnel